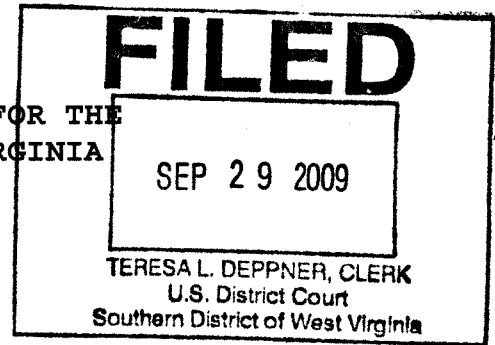


UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF WEST VIRGINIA
CHARLESTON



UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

v.

Criminal No. 2:05-00107
21 U.S.C. § 846

VALERI FRIEND

I N F O R M A T I O N

The United States Attorney Charges:

(Cocaine Conspiracy)

Background

1. At all relevant times:

a. Defendant VALERI FRIEND resided in or near Red Jacket, Mingo County, West Virginia.

b. George M. Lecco, also known as "Porgy," resided in or near Red Jacket, Mingo County, West Virginia, and was the owner of a business called "Pizza Plus," which was also located in Red Jacket, Mingo County West Virginia.

c. Patricia Burton was an employee of the Pizza Plus and an acquaintance of defendant VALERI FRIEND. Patricia Burton was married to Charles Burton.

d. Carmella Blankenship resided in Red Jacket, Mingo County, West Virginia.

e. Charles T. Hatfield resided in Mingo County, West Virginia and was an employee of the Pizza Plus.

f. Carla Collins was a resident of Mingo County, West Virginia, who often frequented the Pizza Plus in Red Jacket.

The Conspiracy

2. From at least approximately the summer of 2003 to on or about May 3, 2005, at or near Red Jacket, Mingo County, West Virginia, within the Southern District of West Virginia and elsewhere, defendant VALERI FRIEND, together with George M. Lecco, also known as "Porgy," Charles T. Hatfield, Patricia Burton, and Charles Burton, who are named in this Information as uncharged conspirators and not as defendants, and other persons whose identities are known and unknown to the United States Attorney, knowingly conspired to commit offenses in violation of 21 U.S.C. § 841(a)(1), that is knowingly and intentionally to distribute quantities of cocaine, a Schedule II controlled substance.

Manner and Means for Carrying Out the Conspiracy

3. It was a part of the conspiracy that George M. Lecco obtained cocaine from a supplier in Columbus, Ohio, and then sold that cocaine from the Pizza Plus to various people.

4. It was further a part of the conspiracy that Patricia Burton and Charles T. Hatfield distributed cocaine from the Pizza Plus for George M. Lecco.

5. It was further a part of the conspiracy that, on a few occasions, defendant VALERI FRIEND obtained cocaine indirectly from George M. Lecco at the Pizza Plus and distributed the cocaine to others.

6. It was further a part of the conspiracy that in February 2005, George M. Lecco ostensibly agreed to cooperate with law enforcement officers with investigations into his cocaine supplier and other cocaine dealers in Mingo County, after law enforcement officers executed a federal search warrant at the Pizza Plus.

7. It was further a part of the conspiracy that in approximately March-April 2005, George M. Lecco continued unlawfully to purchase cocaine and distribute it to other people at the Pizza Plus, notwithstanding his ostensible agreement to cooperate with law enforcement.

8. It was further a part of the conspiracy that in April 2005 George M. Lecco became concerned about Carla Collins providing information to law enforcement regarding his continued unlawful cocaine trafficking and the possibility that Carla Collins had acted as a confidential informant against him.

9. It was further a part of the conspiracy that as a result of his concern about Carla Collins being a "snitch," George M. Lecco asked Patricia Burton to kill Carla Collins and further asked Patricia Burton to talk to defendant VALERI FRIEND about killing Carla Collins, all in exchange for an amount of cocaine.

10. It was further a part of the conspiracy that defendant VALERI FRIEND agreed to participate in killing Carla Collins in exchange for cocaine from George M. Lecco.

11. It was further a part of the conspiracy that on or about April 16, 2005, George M. Lecco provided a pistol to Patricia Burton, who in turn gave the pistol to defendant VALERI FRIEND.

12. It was further a part of the conspiracy that during the night of April 15-16, 2005, defendant VALERI FRIEND, Carmella Blankenship, Patricia Burton, and Carla Collins spent several hours driving in defendant VALERI FRIEND's car around the Red Jacket area and nearby Newtown, in Mingo County, stopping at various places to use cocaine.

13. It was further a part of the conspiracy that in the early morning hours of April 16, 2005, the four individuals arrived in defendant VALERI FRIEND's car at an abandoned trailer on Double Camp Road, near Newtown, and that defendant VALERI FRIEND, Patricia Burton, and Carla Collins went inside the trailer.

14. It was further a part of the conspiracy that once inside the trailer, defendant VALERI FRIEND shot Carla Collins in the chest using a pistol she had received from Patricia Burton.

15. It was further a part of the conspiracy that Carla Collins was also beaten in the head with a rock after being shot and that Carla Collins died shortly thereafter.

16. It was further a part of the conspiracy that defendant VALERI FRIEND and Patricia Burton murdered Carla Collins at the request of George M. Lecco to prevent further communication to federal law enforcement officers of information relating to George M. Lecco's continued, ongoing, and unlawful cocaine distribution activity.

17. It was further a part of the conspiracy that, after Patricia Burton and Carmella Blankenship left the immediate area around the trailer, defendant VALERI FRIEND remained inside and gathered items of evidence and placed them in a plastic garbage bag for future disposal.

18. It was further a part of the conspiracy that in or about the late hours of April 16, 2005, or early morning of April 17, 2005, George M. Lecco, defendant VALERI FRIEND, Patricia Burton, her husband Charles Burton, and Charles T. Hatfield drove in two vehicles to the abandoned trailer on Double Camp where Carla Collins' body lay inside.

19. It was further a part of the conspiracy that Carla Collins' body was covered with black plastic garbage bags, placed in the trunk of defendant VALERI FRIEND's car, moved several hundred feet down Double Camp Road, and buried in a makeshift grave.

20. It was further a part of the conspiracy that on or about April 17, 2005, defendant VALERI FRIEND drove her car to Patricia

Burton's house where she and Charles Burton removed the lining from the trunk of the car. Then, also as part of the conspiracy, Charles Burton burned the lining along with some other items given to him by defendant VALERI FRIEND.

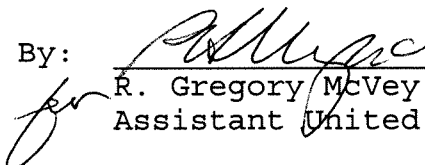
21. It was further a part of the conspiracy that on or about April 17, 2005, Carmella Blankenship and defendant VALERI FRIEND traveled to different areas in nearby Kentucky, where they disposed of, concealed, and otherwise destroyed items of evidence of the murder of Carla Collins.

All in violation of Title 21, United States Code, Section 846.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

CHARLES T. MILLER
United States Attorney

By:


R. Gregory McVey
Assistant United States Attorney

Date Filed: Sept. 29, 2009